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Book Notices.

FELDMANN'S WECHSELLIEDER VON NARSES.¹

Out of the thirty-two lyrical dialogues which Narses is known to have composed, Dr. Feldmann has published eight in this small volume. The manuscript from which it is taken contains nine, but one of them had already been published by Professor Sachau in 1896.² Three of the remaining eight were published by Lamy; but they are republished because of the number of variations contained in this new manuscript. In his preface, the author gives us a discussion of the manuscripts and published portions of Narses' poems. The form of these dialogue poems was fixed, perhaps, by Ephrem Syrus. In those of Narses, there is first an introduction of from four to twelve four-lined stanzas of seven syllables a line. This is followed by a dialogue of forty to fifty stanzas between two persons, or sometimes more, each of whom always speaks for one stanza at a time. The lines have no rhyme and are not acrostic. They are of value, first, because of their age and style; but secondly, and especially, for the light they throw on the religious beliefs of the man and the times.

Narses was a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia and a zealous upholder of Theodore's teachings. While professor at Edessa he became involved in the Nestorian controversy and was obliged to flee to Nisibis, where he founded a new school and became a brilliant teacher and voluminous writer, celebrated for an encounter, perhaps personal, with Cyril of Alexandria. Living in the midst of the conflict and participating in its debates and persecutions, we can readily understand how the thoughts of Narses were centered on the nature of Christ's person, as it is in most of these songs; and when we know what he himself suffered, we can appreciate the bitterness of his opposition to Cyril, as expressed in the fifth of the songs here published, where Nestorius calls Cyril "wolf," "godless," "blasphemer." After reading the long dialogue between Nestorius and Cyril, one cannot but believe that both were sincere and both partly right and partly wrong.

Everyone who wishes to master the intricacies of the theological discussions of the fifth century must avail himself of Narses' works. The translation of Dr. Feldmann is good, but not always above dispute.

¹ SYRISCHE WECHSELLIEDER VON NARSES. Ein Beitrag zur altchristlichen syrischen Hymnologie nach einer Handschrift der königlichen Bibliothek in Berlin. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und bearbeitet von Franz Feldmann, Dr. und Rep. der Theologie. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1896. ix+55 und 35 pp.; 8vo. M. 5.

² "Über die Poesie in der Volkssprache der Nestorianer." *Sitzungsberichte der Königl. Preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Berlin, 1896, pp. 179-215.

For example, in 1, 14*b*, "therefore, proclaim not that my son is a king," is better than "my son to be king;" in 1, 20*b*, read "another one that hath been born is king," not "the king is that other one who was born." Again, it might have been well for the translator to indicate, for the benefit of those who cannot read the Syriac original, that the introduction to the song on the birth of our Lord is a play on the word ܠܒܝܬ, the Syriac translation of ἀνατολή in Luke 1:78. This is not brought out at all in the German version, where we have three different words for the six times recurrent verb; and there is nothing to show that two nouns from the same root occur and that one pun is made on it. In general, however, the work is well done and is to be commended.

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BEER'S TEXT OF JOB.¹

The conscientious teacher of Old Testament exegesis who is not satisfied with the mere reproduction of half a dozen commentaries finds himself, on every step, embarrassed by the condition of the text which he undertakes to explain. He may be hampered, much to his chagrin, by lack of time and means; his interests may be historical or theological; yet, who would wholly dispense with the tedious labor of textual criticism, causing fatigue of the body and anguish of soul? We often pray to be spared at least the bending over so many books which no device, it appears, can put within a convenient distance from our desk. We need, especially for the more difficult books, a collection of textual data gathered mainly from the versions, but also from old and modern commentaries which frequently contain valuable hints and occasionally offer conjectural emendations possessing a high degree of probability. While the textual critic cannot very well accomplish his task without constant recourse to the probable meaning of the context, he is, on the whole, proof against the temptations which beset the path of the exegete who would, at all hazards, elicit some sense from a stubborn and enigmatical text; the textual critic is indeed in a position to weigh the textual evidence coolly, without prejudice or preconceived opinion. We do not care so much for results—it is our own business to give them definite form—as for the material out of which the text is to be created. Such a collection of material is not necessarily a mechanical piece of work. An uncritical array of readings will be of very little use to us. We want evidence sifted. That which is unessential for our purposes need not be given a place. Above all, the text underlying the versions must be restored; it is on this slippery ground where the utmost caution is required. Paraphrastic expansion is carefully to be distinguished from a rendering which is literal. A thorough acquaintance with the

¹ DER TEXT DES BUCHES HIÖB. Untersucht von Lic. Dr. Georg Beer. Zwei Hefte. Marburg: N. G. Elwert'sche Buchhandlung, 1895, 1897. ix + xvi + 258 pp. (p. 89 is printed twice). M. 2.80 + 5.60.